



HOPTON-WOOD

STONE

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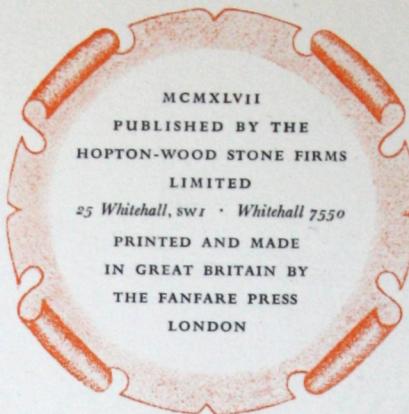


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HOPTON-WOOD STONE

A BOOK FOR THE ARCHITECT

AND CRAFTSMAN



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AND HOPTON-WOOD STONE





THE GEOLOGY *of Hopton-Wood Stone*

MANY MILLIONS of years ago, long before the appearance of mankind, most of the British Isles lay under water, and the grand mountain country which we know as Derbyshire was merely a bed of limey mud. Conditions in this part of the sea were favourable to the existence of certain marine organisms and particularly to certain types having hard parts composed of calcium carbonate. They included corals, crinoids (sea-lilies), brachiopods (twin-shelled molluscs), and foraminifera (minute organisms with a chambered shell); and their skeletons, accumulating on the sea floor, were buried, not only by successive deposits of skeletal remains, but also by quantities of calcium carbonate precipitated from the sea water. Terrific pressure over millions of years from higher and higher sediments and from earth movements that sank our valleys and flung up mountain peaks, compacted them in their partly recrystallised calcite matrix to make layer on layer of limestone.

It was the era known to geologists as the Carboniferous period for, towards its close, vast primeval forests were buried and crushed, and became coal; so the 'Mountain Limestone' of this period is more scientifically called Carboniferous and a very beautiful variety of Lower Carboniferous Limestone is the unique Hopton-Wood Stone.

Unique, because there is only one Hopton-Wood Stone, which is quarried by The Hopton-Wood Stone Firms Limited, at

Middleton-by-Wirksworth, near Matlock Bath, in Derbyshire. In a district famous for remarkably pure limestones, Hopton-Wood stands out as exceptional. The calcium-carbonate content of other stones is very high, frequently exceeding 94% of the rock mass, yet the average calcium-carbonate content of Hopton-Wood is more than 99%, while its iron content stands at the extraordinarily low figure of 0.02%. This purity, this absence of foreign sediments of grit and sand and mud, shows that no streams were draining into that part of the sea-bed during the long ages when the Hopton-Wood Measures were being deposited. Tranquil and relatively constant settling led to very slight variation in chemical purity from bed to bed, which are of an unusual thickness. A bedding plane usually indicates a pause or changed conditions in the deposition; the thick beds of the Hopton-Wood Measures prove that interruptions were less frequent here than in the formation of most other mountain limestones.

For some reason yet to be explained, Hopton-Wood is less erratically jointed than adjacent limestones. Joints are caused by shrinkage of the mass in drying-out and in compacting, or by folding and faulting of the strata: in Hopton-Wood the effect of these actions seems to have been reduced to the minimum, and large blocks of the stone can readily be quarried.

Visitors to Middleton Quarry observe across the face a band of fine-grained impervious clay, which is the decomposed remains of lava that flowed from some submarine volcanic eruption, sealing off the sediment below. This feature, known locally as the 'Great Clay', was the last of Hopton-Wood's primeval blessings, for it has formed a sill, preventing the percolation into the lower measures of water which would not only have enlarged the joints but filled them with quantities of clayey material whose iron constituents must have ruined the delicate even colouring which is one of the great charms of Hopton-Wood Stone.

The lava overflow ceased; upon it the depositing of limestone was resumed, but not as uniformly as before. Above the 'Great

THE HOPTON-WOOD MEASURES



Clay' lies the ordinary mountain limestone of Derbyshire. This makes excellent road-surfacing and furnace-flux, but has not the solid, uniform texture which renders the Hopton-Wood Measures so attractive to architect and sculptor.

Hopton-Wood Stone is Dark or Light, according to whether it comes from the top or the bottom of the quarry face. Perhaps the beds which lie immediately below the band of igneous clay were impregnated with volcanic ash blown into the sea before the onset of erupting lava. That is a geological point which has not been settled, but the two complementary yet contrasting tones of Hopton-Wood have an attractiveness that needs no arguing.

The qualities which distinguish Hopton-Wood Stone were early recognised and its reputation as an English stone of great beauty has grown steadily during the hundred and fifty years since its first uncovering. Architects and builders know that for embellishment and enrichment no stone can surpass it, for it may be supplied in all lengths from ten feet downwards and in thicknesses varying from three feet to three quarters of an inch; while its fine and compact texture combined with extreme hardness enable the most intricate designs to be worked sharply and reliably, with a polish as brilliant as that of any marble obtainable.

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THE BANK OF ENGLAND

Sir Herbert Baker, RA, and A. T. Scott, FRIBA

THE ARCHITECT *and Hopton-Wood Stone*

THE QUARRYMAN finds comfort in the paradox that, while stone-construction may diminish, the desire for stone in building is undeniably on the increase. When the camera became popular there was no lack of jeremiahs to prophesy the death of portrait-painting; just as the cinema would oust the stage and radio meant the end of concert-going, so the coming of the girder and the concrete-mixer were jubilantly hailed by the iconoclast as dooms to brick and stone. In fact, none of these tragedies occurred, for painting gained fresh impetus, the stage awoke to new life, never before have concerts been so crowded, and concrete's popularity has made stone seem more desirable to the discriminating taste.

It may be an historic fact that stone is no longer the pre-eminent dynamic factor in building-construction, yet it is still the finest architectural medium. The fundamentals of the art are sought in stone, and where it is desirable to preserve an emotional balance with tradition, as in such works as the Bank of England, the architect will choose to design within the limits and conventions stone imposes. The demand for stone in facing and lining has never been so heavy; for interior work, particularly, freed from the domination of wood and stucco, stone is more and more specified by architects, who allow it to express its intrinsic beauty without apology or concealment.

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paper, or pretend to functions which it is not in fact performing.

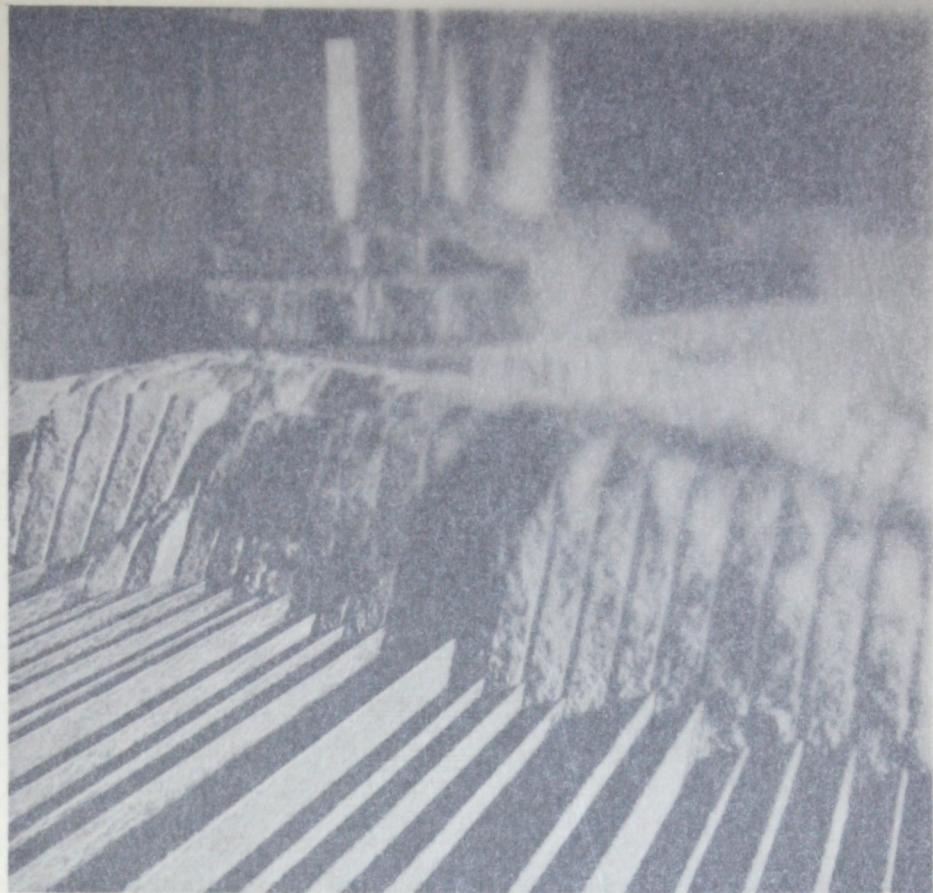
Here is a new architectural democracy where stone, while looking handsome, must do its share of work, preserve its own quality, yet discreetly integrate with surrounding materials, be these wood, glass, metal, vitrolite, the 'ginger-bread' of Adam plasterwork, or, hardest of all concessions, other kinds of stone. It must have brilliance of surface and texture allied to strength and durability, and a colour which is in keeping with the mode. It must be a well-mannered stone.

All this is Hopton-Wood. It has the inherent loveliness of marble, but the present reaction from an indiscriminate nineteenth-century use of foreign marble and its commercial sour-milk substitute does not reflect at all on Hopton-Wood, for the discreet creamy colour of the Light and the bolder yet honeyed tones of the Dark are thoroughly twentieth century in feeling. Even in its rough sawn state it is a handsome stone, but when it has been brought to a fine polish it is unrivalled in a beauty that appeals to the sophisticated modern taste for subtlety.

Stones are chosen for their characteristics and Hopton-Wood is notable for style. Yet Hopton-Wood is strong as well as beautiful, having nearly three times the crushing resistance of most Freestones; so it is especially suitable for columns, pilasters, staircases, ashlar, and flooring.

It is a particular characteristic of Hopton-Wood, shared by few other British stones, that while it may be quarried in fairly large sizes it is equally capable of the utmost delicacy; it can be used for massive effects or sawn to $\frac{3}{4}$ -in. thickness for wall linings.

A visit to Middleton Quarry demonstrates at once the care and craftsmanship which are devoted to the quarrying and preparation of the stone. Difficulties patiently overcome are visible to the experienced eye in the very overburden—that soil, mountain limestone and toadstone or lower lava—which must be cleared before each stage of quarrying can begin: yet it is proverbial that the greater the overburden the more excellent the stone beneath.



SAWING
HOPTON-WOOD STONE

As it lies, Hopton-Wood is in beds from 3 ft. to 12 ft. thick and is jointed naturally, not only by the horizontal 'partings' that separate the layers, but also vertically. Work is not done hastily. A stone is carefully chosen from the layer for 'winning' — the operation of detaching a block from surroundings it has known for half a million years — and the newly fractured surfaces are minutely examined for evidence of flaws. It is then turned over to the instinctively skilled hand of the scappler, who roughly squares-up the stone for sawing. Should the decision be to split it, the men concerned will drill a line of shallow holes across the block, which are then gently pegged till the two halves fall apart.

These men, who have passed their lives within a few yards of the quarry, know the virtues and foibles of Hopton-Wood better perhaps than they understand the chemical mysteries of their own bodies: they can tell at a glance good stone from bad and, by a

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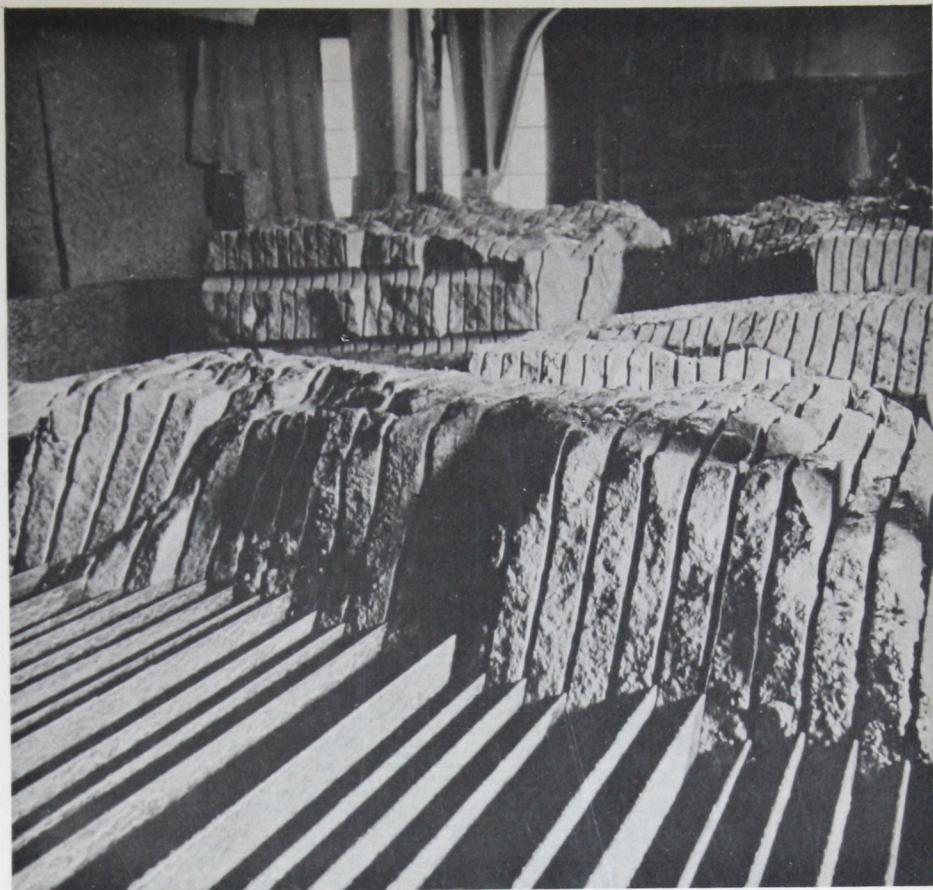
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sense attained only with experience, diagnose a fault which is invisible to the untrained eye.

The difference between Light and Dark Hopton-Wood is that the former is less densely marked by crystalline figurations, although the character of both stones is the same. In formation the dark measures lie over the light, and though there are gradations of tone the two extremes are so clearly distinguished and so consistent in texture that exact replication of tint can be assured over considerably long runs. If the working of the stone be entrusted to our own masons and craftsmen we can guarantee that colourings and markings will match over the whole of a commission. In bedding and backing, efflorescence and even staining may result from indiscriminate use of unsuitable materials; but we have made careful research into this subject and it is advisable to follow our considered recommendations.

A stone may have strength and beauty, yet be unpopular with architects and builders for two reasons: its cost and its unneighbourliness. Hopton-Wood is not a cheap material, but when one considers that it has as much hardness and reliability as Carrara Marble and will take and retain a brilliant polish equal to that of any marble in the world, that it may with perfect assurance be specified for work requiring the utmost delicacy and intricacy as well as for positions demanding bulk and strength, then one cannot call it expensive.

As for architectural good manners, Hopton-Wood is well bred and will harmonise with anything but the shoddy and meretricious. One effect it will not give is pretentious vulgarity; but for dignity, charm, restraint, and that enrichment which is the opposite of ostentation, Hopton-Wood is without equal. In the Sheffield City Hall engraved venetian-glass mirrors are let into Hopton-Wood walls. In Derby Police Court metal balustrades and fittings go perfectly with Hopton-Wood wall linings. At the New York World's Fair in 1939, a dedicatory panel of Hopton-Wood was mounted on the fluted-plaster walls of the British

Pavilion; Hopton-Wood columns, arches, and ashlar are combined with glazed brick in the Prudential Assurance buildings at Furnival's Inn; Shoreditch Public Library, bombed in the war, had a painted frieze and wrought-iron grilles with walls and stairs of Hopton-Wood; the Imperial Institute has Hopton-Wood piers, arches, pilasters, and cornice with plaster work above wood panelling. Tile and mosaic are introduced with piers and linings of Hopton-Wood in the Catholic Church, Spanish Place; in the County Hall at Northallerton, pillars, stairs, ashlar, and balustrades are of Hopton-Wood, while the floors are chequered in black and white marbles, and caps and copings are of Black Frosterley Marble. Hopton-Wood undoubtedly looks finest in restrained surroundings, to which it imparts a delicate warmth and texture, yet in the entrance to Sheffield City Hall it integrates triumphantly with a lavish and colourful scheme of marble, brightly decorated plaster vaulting, wrought-iron grilles, bronze gates, and stained glass.

In the nicety of transition from stone pillar and wall-lining to a plaster ceiling Hopton-Wood shows a pleasing graciousness. The pictures of the Bank of England demonstrate how subtly the transition has been managed by the use of Hopton-Wood, whose colour flatters and brings out the quality of the plasterwork.

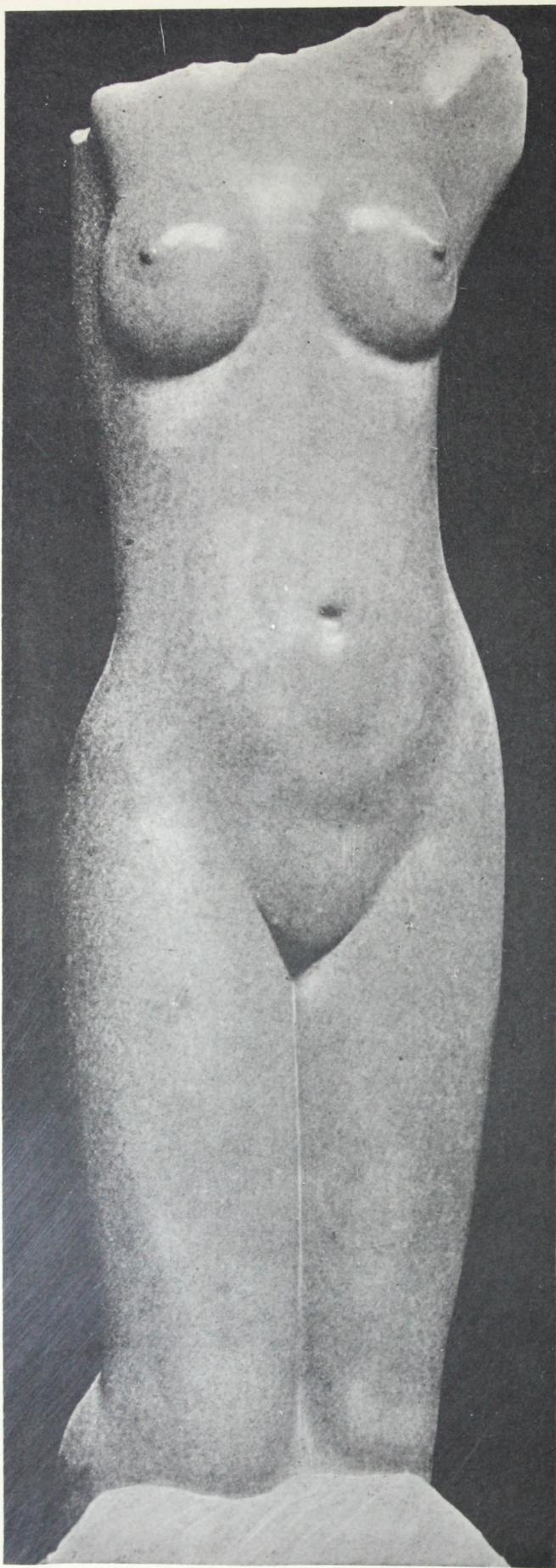
LETTERING

CUT IN HOPTON-WOOD STONE BY

Laurence Cribb

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MANKIND



Eric Gill

THE CRAFTSMAN

and Hopton-Wood Stone

HOSE WHO carve in stone are, more than any other artist or craftsman, at the mercy of their material. A painter can discard, in the very middle of his work, a pigment that has failed him and procure another; a composer of music, if he cannot reach his effect with the means to hand, may call for any instrument he desires to augment his orchestra; a poet . . . but there is no need to labour the contrast between these free men and him whose medium is unmerciful, allowing no second thoughts, no painting-out, no change of key, no proof revision. Even the carver of wood, because the piece will usually be smaller and so more confidently chosen, is spared the chagrin of that artist who, after hours of labour, encounters in the heart of his stone an irremediable fault.

There are stones which have immediate beauty, yet are useless to the sculptor: too soft, too coarse, too unreliable, they give more trouble than they are worth. Beauty in stone must be much more than skin-deep if it is to stand up to the graver and chisel. Beauty, indeed, must join the queue with other characteristics equally important.

What are the characteristics of Hopton-Wood? First, it is a hard and consistent stone, of a compact and crystalline texture with even markings caused by symmetrical crinoids or 'sealilies'. Second, it will take a brilliant polish and it is an English stone which is so uniform, that it may be matched, piece for piece, with an exact similarity of tint and texture. Third, Hopton-Wood is obtainable in two colours, the Light being a rich



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PANELS ON THE

MOOT HALL, WIRKSWORTH

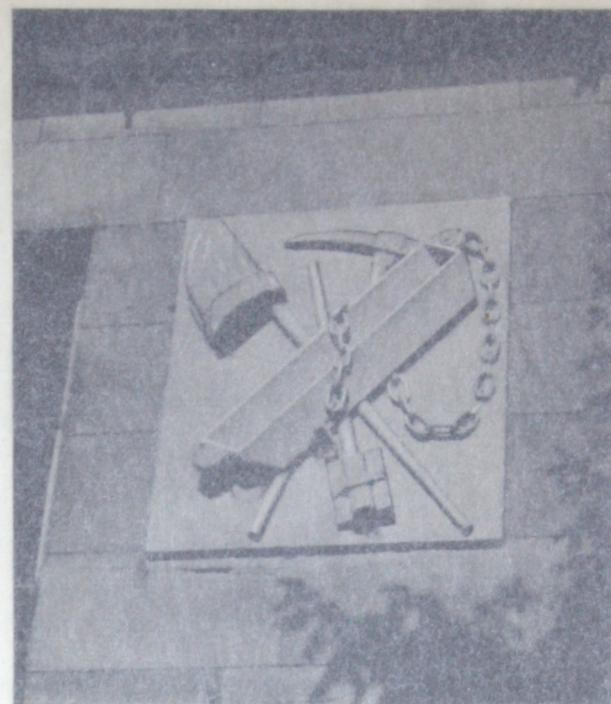
warm cream, and the Dark, having more encrinities, a deeper version of the other. Fourth, age does not impair its consistent colouring; and, provided our advice is sought for bedding and backing, the surface of the stone will never stain or powder.

Monumental and architectural carvers appreciate the wearing qualities of Hopton-Wood. The same sharp arris that the artist leaves will be as clean to the eye of many generations to come. One hundred and thirty years ago the façade of the Moot Hall at Wirksworth was embellished with panels of Hopton-Wood bearing the symbols associated with the ancient office of Bar-master. Today, despite exposure to the rough climate of the Derbyshire mountains, they are as clear-cut as the day they were put up, in sharp contrast to the scaling wall behind them.

For those who desire to erect a memorial of enduring beauty, Hopton-Wood cannot be excelled. As small tablet or heroic statuary, as a headstone or a mausoleum, this lovely stone will fulfil every conceivable requirement. It is a co-operating stone and responds to the mood of artist or craftsman: reverential for solemn usage yet charming as an object of virtu, handsome for

THEIR SHARP ARRIS

CONTRASTS WITH SCALING WALLS



domestic embellishment (as, for example, a fireplace) and as subtle as any sculptor cares to make it.

As for general interior work, Hopton-Wood is ideal not only for plain wall-linings, as well as for stairs and pavings, but also in all those decorative uses, such as balustrades, ornamental columns and pilasters, where the craftsman's skill may achieve breadth or delicacy in a stone of almost infinite range.

When so many well-known artists have used Hopton-Wood it might be invidious to name a few, yet it would be ungrateful to close this brief account of the stone without a tribute to the memory of that consummate artist and craftsman, Eric Gill, who made Hopton-Wood peculiarly his own. A lover of fine lettering, Gill used Hopton-Wood for much of his best inscriptive work; a master of bas-relief, his Stations of the Cross in Westminster Cathedral demonstrate conclusively his preference for Hopton-Wood; a sculptor of many lovely pieces, his Hopton-Woods seem to be the ultimate flowering of his genius. So fastidious a craftsman would not have tolerated a stone that did not satisfy explicitly all the exacting canons of his difficult art.



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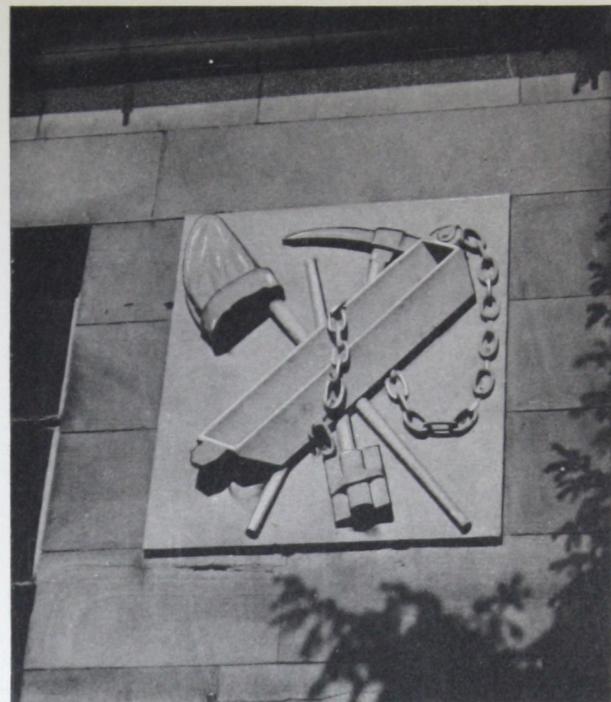
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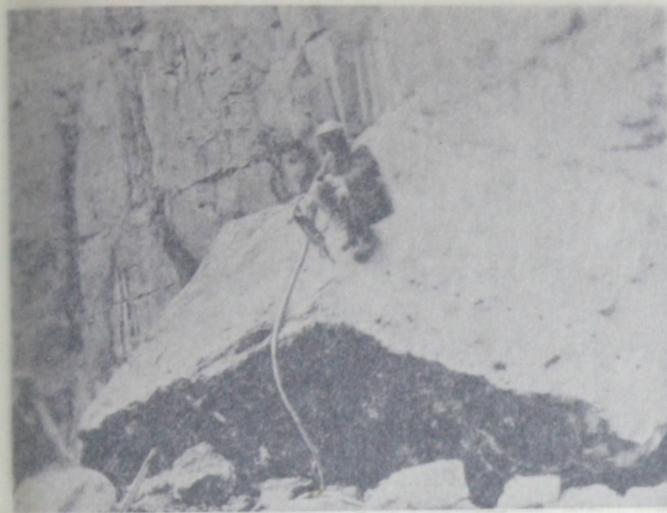
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GETTING HOPTON-WOOD



REDUCING A NEWLY-FELLED BLOCK



EXPERTS IN CONFERENCE



TURNING THE BLOCK



SPLITTING THE BLOCK





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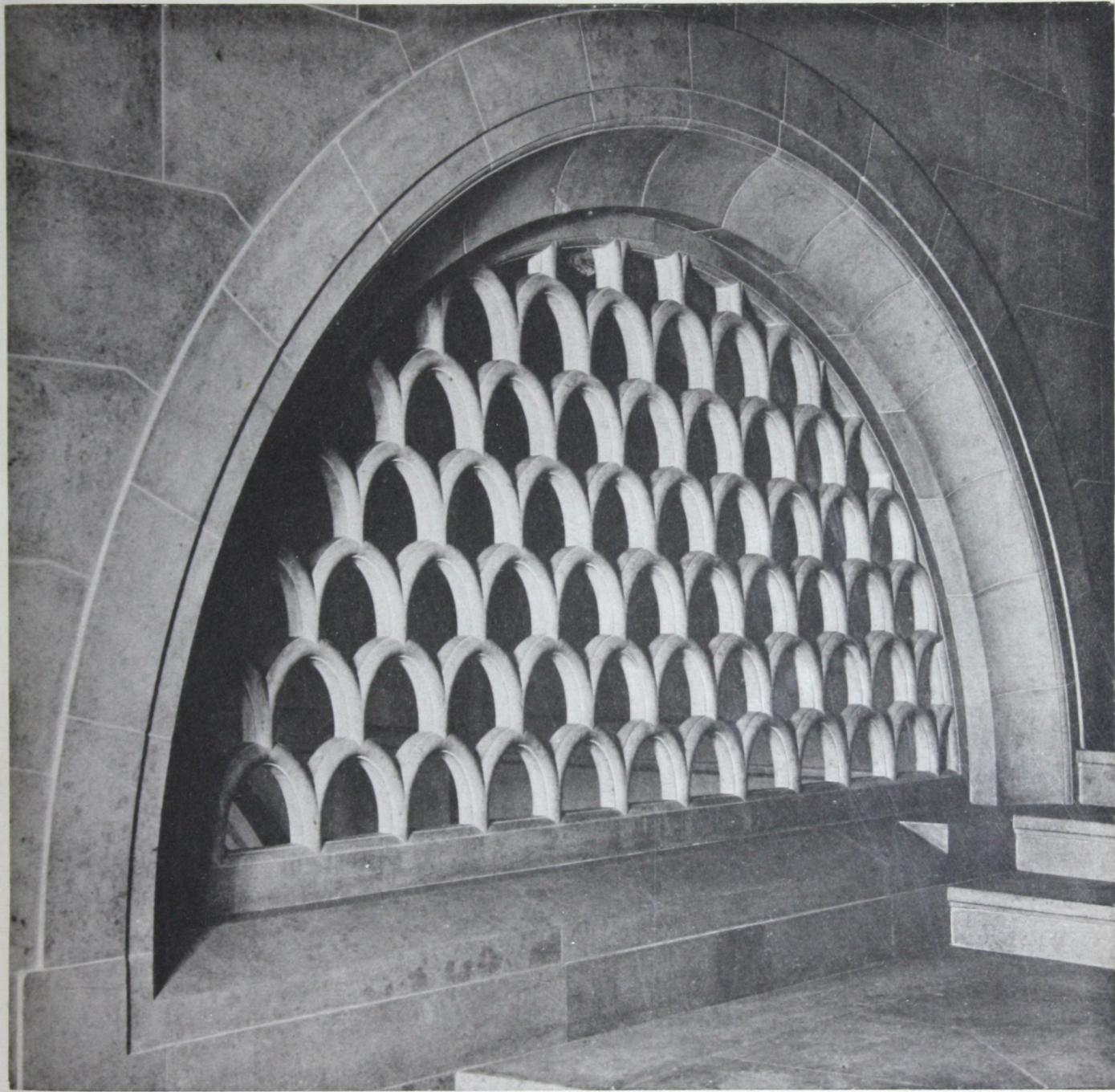
SPLITTING THE BLOCK



SCAPPLING



USING HOPTON-WOOD



THE BANK OF ENGLAND : CARVED GRILLE

Sir Herbert Baker, RA, and A. T. Scott, FRIBA

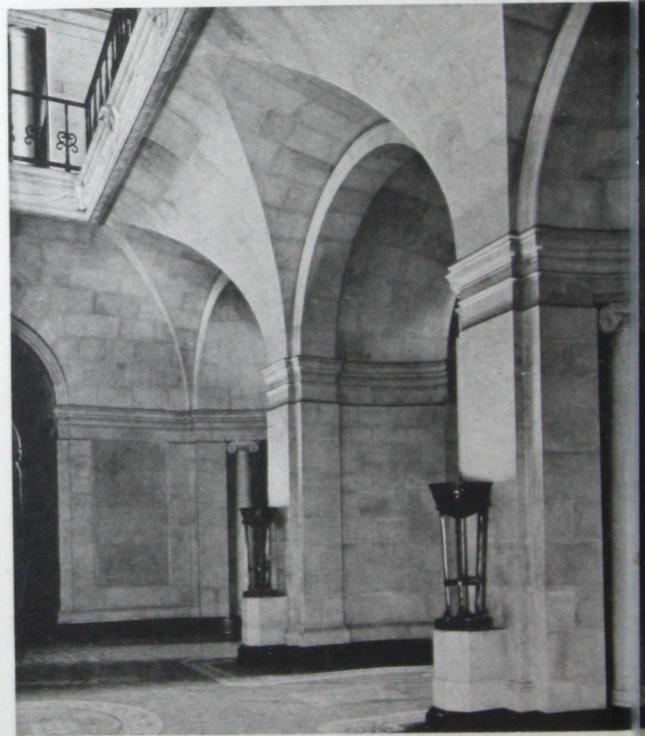


WELSH BOARD OF HEALTH, CARDIFF: WALL LININGS, PAVING

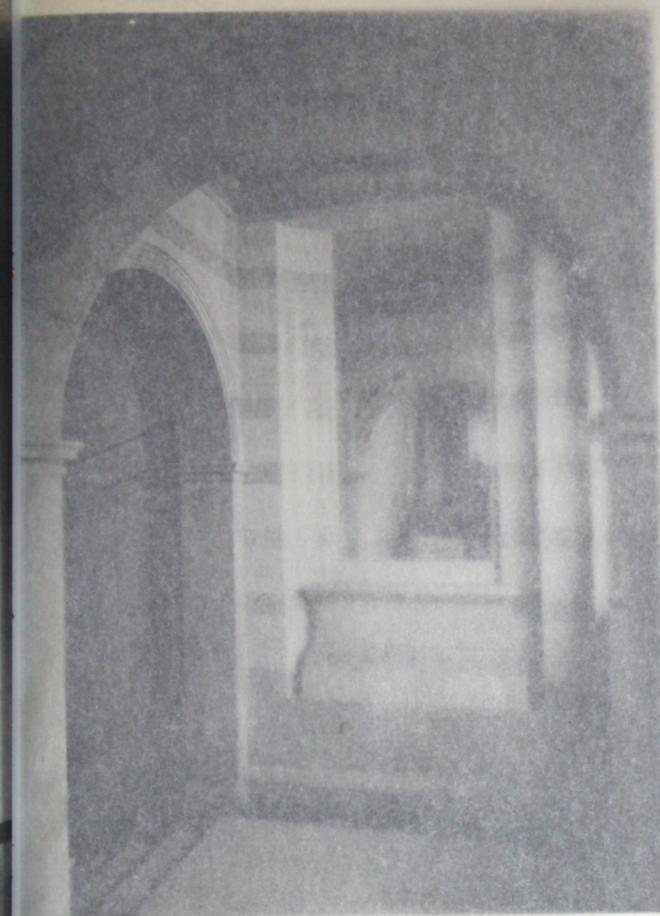
HM Office of Works



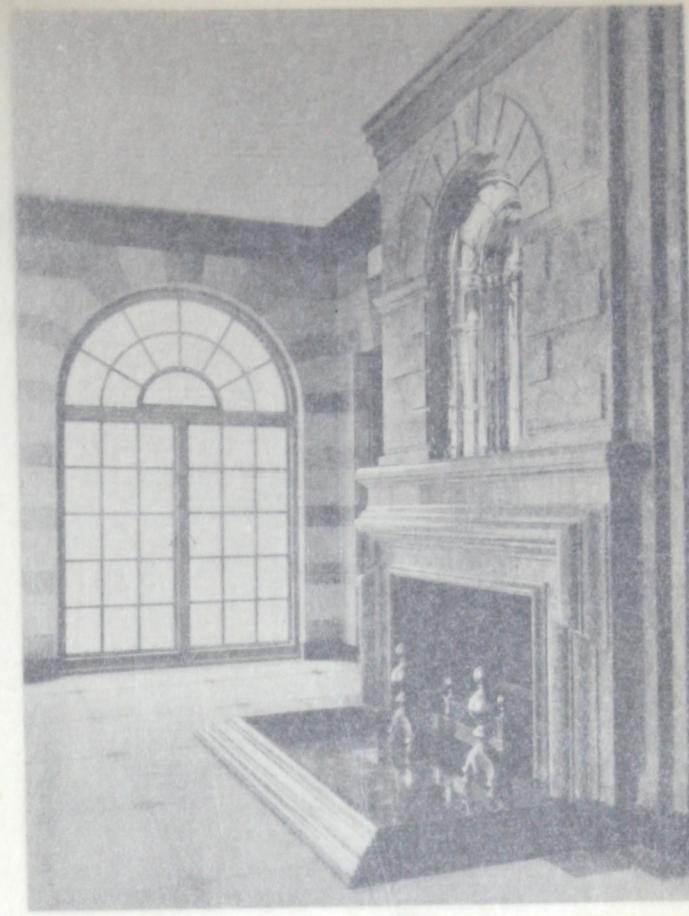
THE BANK OF ENGLAND



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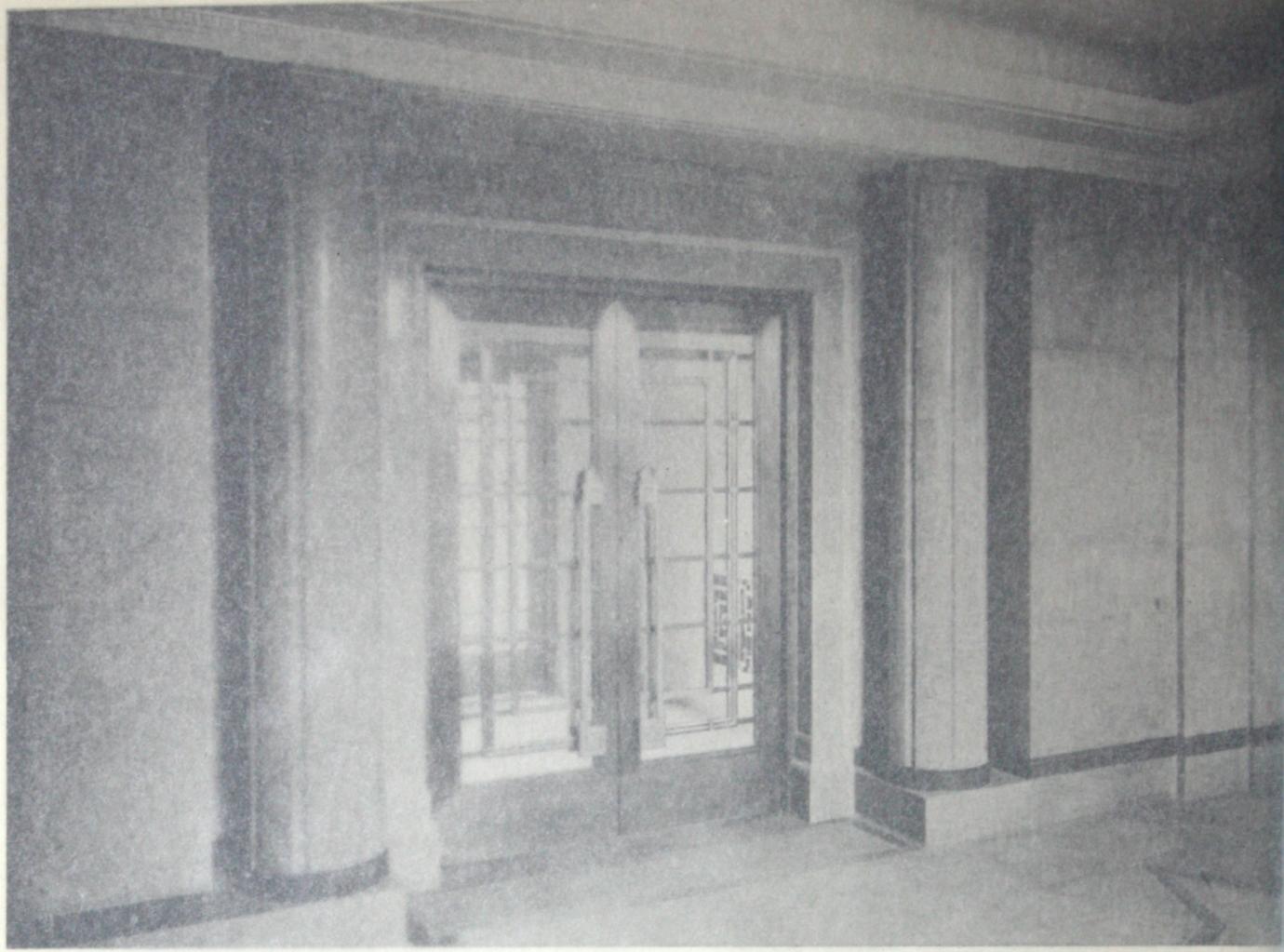
THE CITY HALL, SHEFFIELD: WALL LININGS
E. Vincent Harris, RA



THE CIVIC BUILDING, LEEDS: WALL LININGS, FIREPLACE
E. Vincent Harris, RA

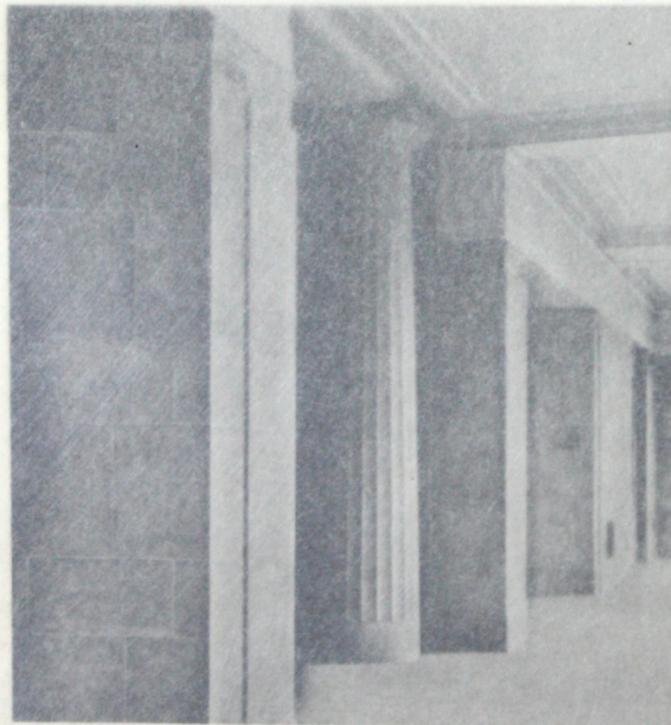


WINCHESTER COLLEGE: CLOISTERS, CLOISTER



WELSH BOARD OF HEALTH, CARDIFF: WALL LININGS, PAVING

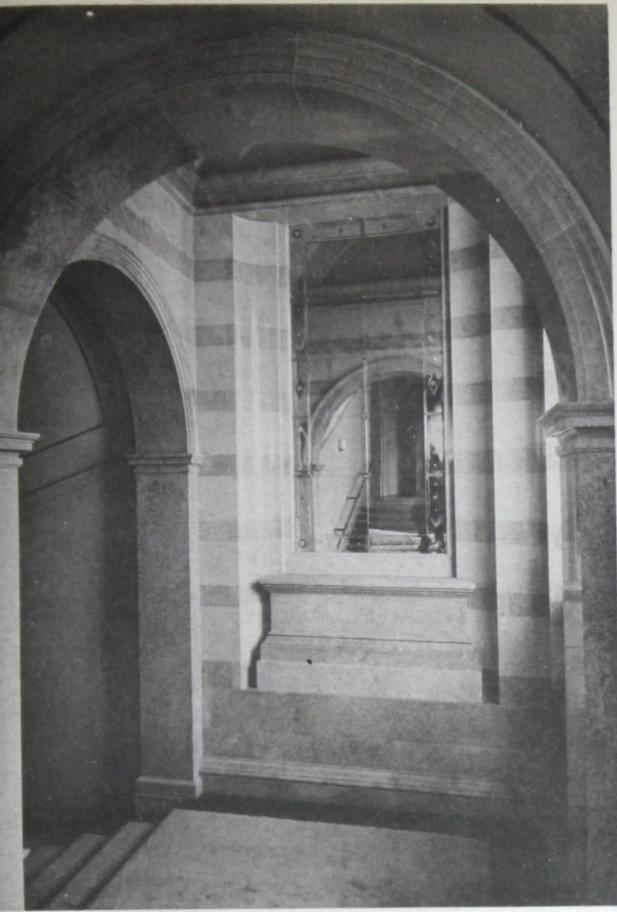
HM Office of Works



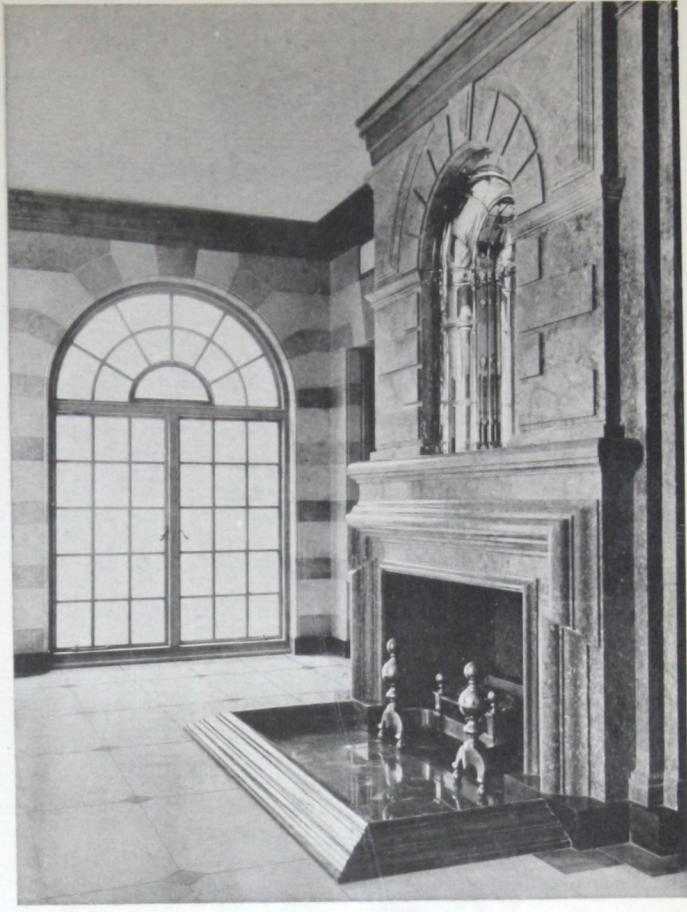
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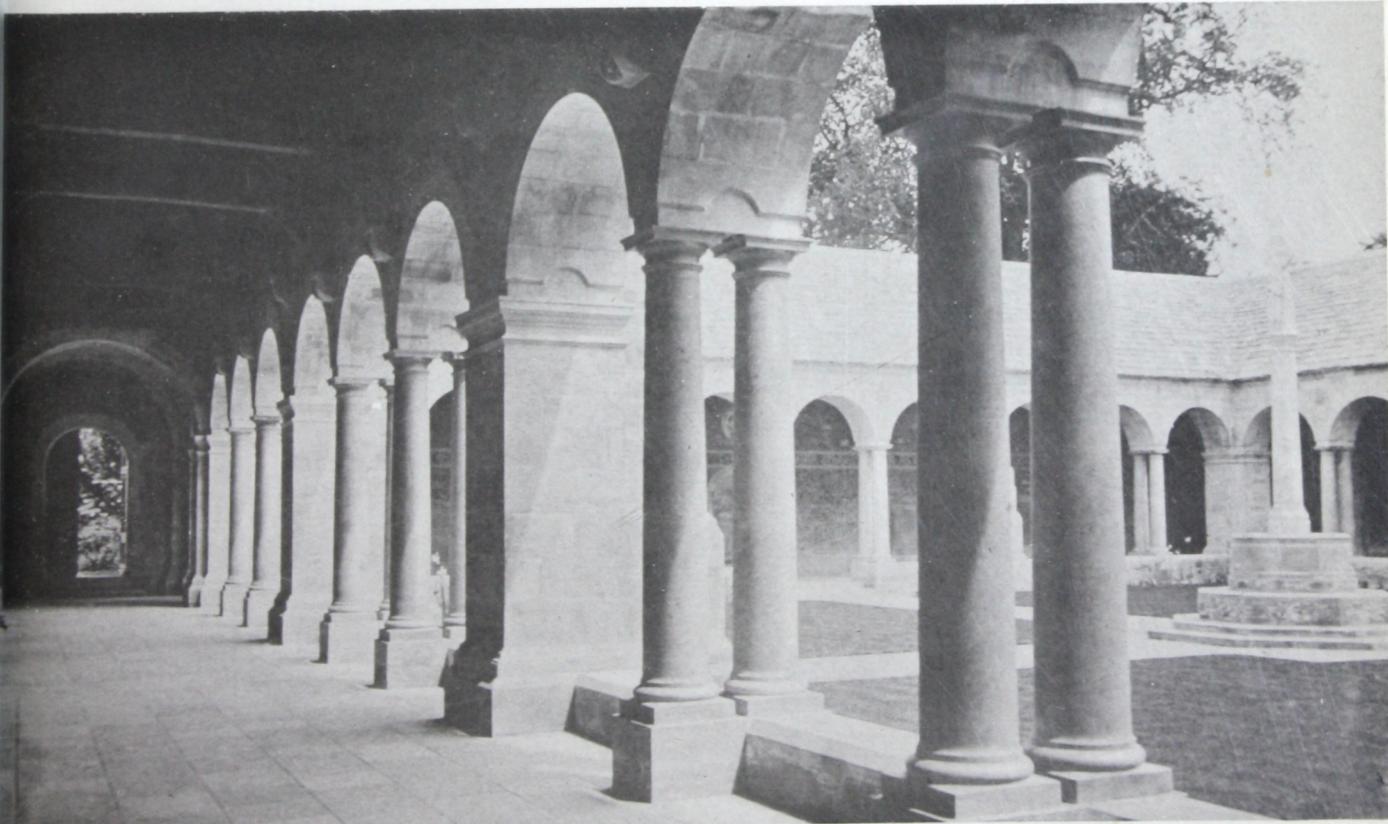
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THE CIVIC BUILDING, LEEDS: WALL LININGS, FIREPLACE
E. Vincent Harris, RA



WINCHESTER COLLEGE : CLOISTERS, CROSS AND PAVING

Sir Herbert Baker, RA



POLICE COURT, DERBY: WALL LININGS

C. H. Aslin, FRIBA



THE CITY HALL, SHEFFIELD : WALL LININGS

E. Vincent Harris, RA



UIRHAM
ABOVE THE STORIED
CITY RINGED ABOUT
WITH SHINING WATERS
STANDS GOD'S ANCIENT HOUSE
OVER THE WINDY UPLANDS
GAZING OUT TOWARD THE SEA
AND DEEP ABOUT IT DROWSE
AT THE GREY DREAMS OF
THE BURIED CENTURIES
AND THRO' ALL TIME ACROSS
THE RUSTLING WEIRS THE
ANCIENT RIVER PASSES
THUS IT LIES EXCEEDING
WISE AND STRONG
AND FULL OF YEARS

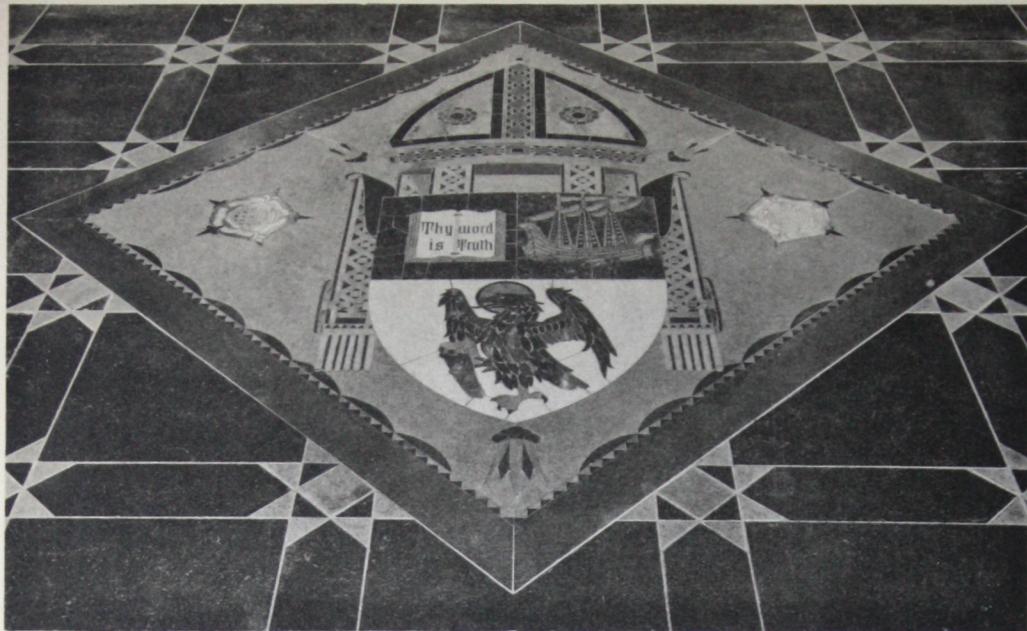
CARVING HOPTON-WOOD



THE SOWER,

BROADCASTING HOUSE

Eric Gill



LIVERPOOL CATHEDRAL:

PAVEMENT

Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, RA



FIREPLACE :

KERB AND BREAST

ELPHINSTONE TABLET,

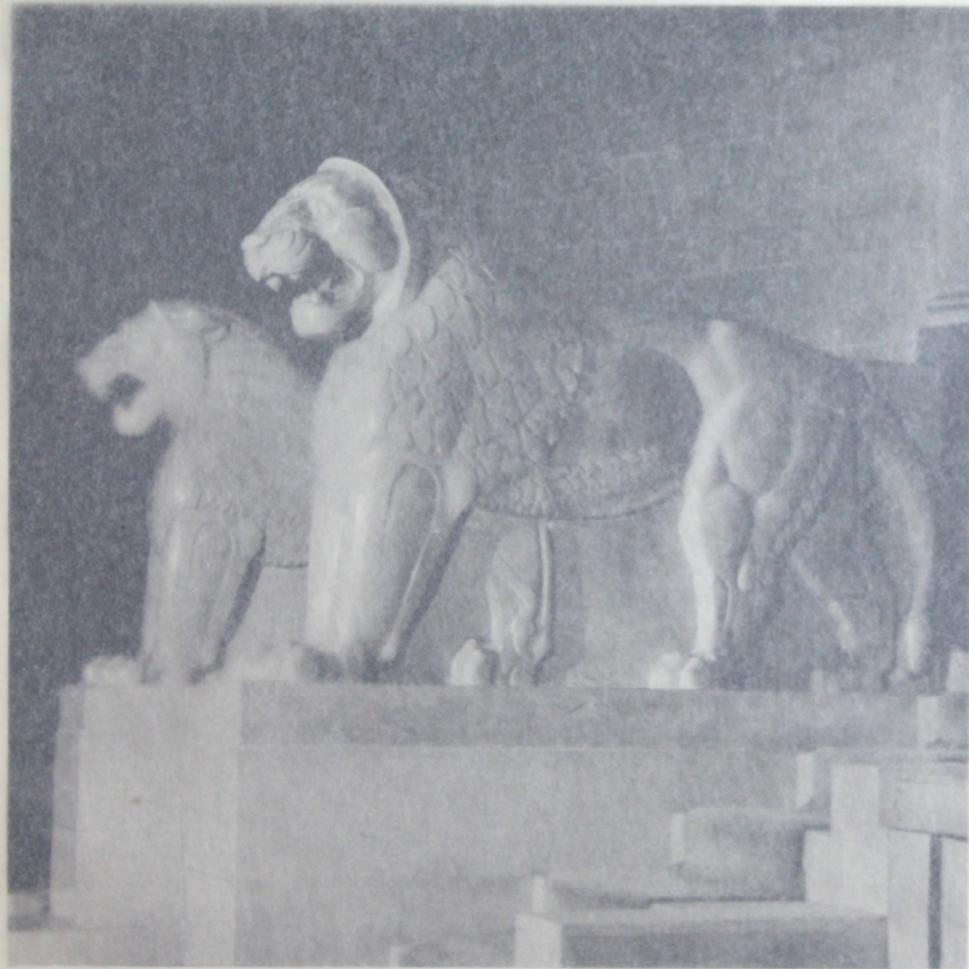
BAGSHOT

Edmund Ware, FRBS

In loving
memory of

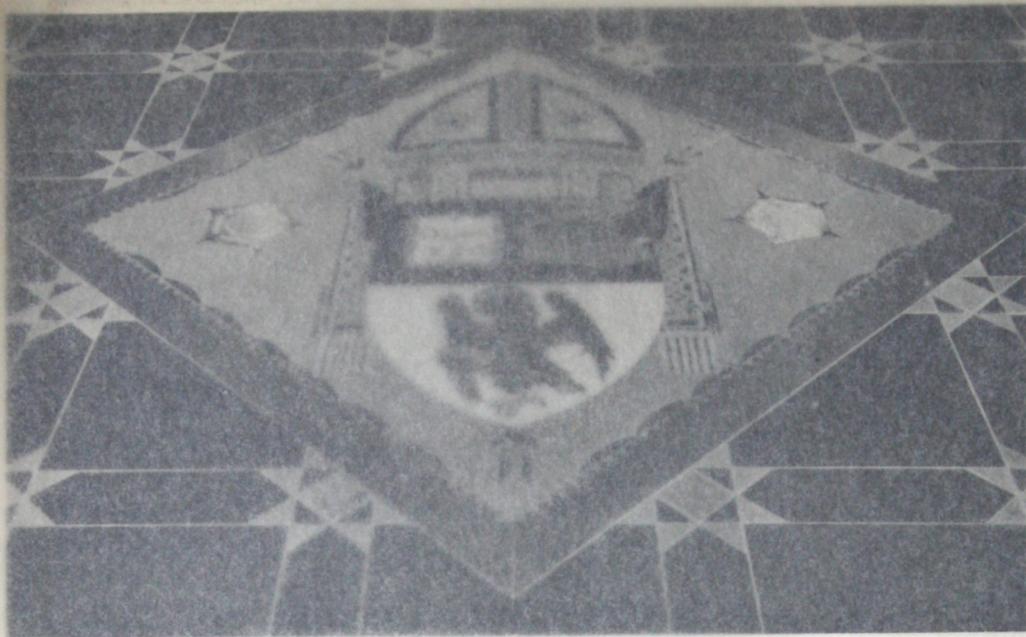
ANNIE FRANCES

daughter of W.H.COLE of West Woodhay
Newbury, Berks. Wife of Major General
SIR HOWARD ELPHINSTONE, V.C.
Lady of Grace of St John of Jerusalem
Born 3rd May 1856, died at Pinewood
Bagsshot on the 12th November 1938
Dearly loved by her children, grandchildren
and great grandchildren



THE CITY HALL, SHEFFIELD:

LIONS. *John Hodge*



LIVERPOOL CATHEDRAL:

PAVEMENT

Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, RA



FIREPLACE:

KERB AND BREAST

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CRAFTSMANSHIP

